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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 27 November 1991, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. SHIHABI	(Saudi Arabia)
later:	Mr. SANOUSSI (Vice-President)	(Guinea)

- The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General [35] (continued)
- Organization of work
- The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General [35] (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 35 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/46/586, A/46/623 and Corr.1, A/46/652)

Mr. SAEED (Pakistan): There has been no peace in the Middle East since the region erupted into conflict nearly 45 years ago. The positive changes that have taken place in the international political situation have given rise to the hope that a just and durable peace in the Middle East may at last be within reach. It is our sincere hope that the peace process currently under way will eventually lead to a durable, just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute and the issue of Palestine.

The untiring efforts of President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker of the United States have provided a new impetus to the search for peace in the Middle East. These efforts were crucial to the convening of the peace conference on the Middle East, under the co-chairmanship of the Soviet Union and the United States. It is now incumbent upon the parties involved to persevere on this path and arrive at a just and comprehensive settlement. The international community is called upon to sustain this momentum and to encourage the parties concerned to move forward.

A durable peace in the Middle East is not possible without the complete and full withdrawal of Israel from all Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of a State of their own in their homeland. In our view, the issue of Palestine is the crux of the larger Middle East conflict. The nexus between the two is undeniable. Peace will elude the Middle East if the issue of Palestine remains unresolved.

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan)

Pakistan fully shares international aversion to Israel's policy systematically to expand and annex the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories. Israel persists in its mistaken belief that, through its settlements policy, aimed at changing the demographic composition of the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, it can legitimize the annexation of these territories. Such measures are contrary to international law and are therefore null and void. They only serve to undermine international efforts aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict.

Israel's insistence on establishing new settlements in occupied territories can only be viewed as an attempt to impede the present peace process. Its past intransigence has undermined every peace initiative. Israel should realize that peace based on force and on its own terms can be neither just nor durable.

Over the years, the Palestine Liberation Organization has progressively shown greater readiness to enter into a serious political dialogue. In 1988 the Palestinian leadership took the historic decision to accept Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Once again, as a reflection of its commitment to a negotiated settlement, the Palestinian leadership agreed to participate in the Middle East peace conference, a decision taken in spite of the preconditions set by Israel. It conclusively demonstrates that, as a people persecuted for years and deprived of their basic rights, the Palestinians are sincere in their desire for a peaceful settlement.

In order to underscore its commitment to peace, Israel too should express its readiness to negotiate a settlement of the Middle East problem on the

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan)

basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which endorse the land-for-peace principle. The occupation of southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights should be brought to an end. The right of the Palestinian people to a homeland and a State of their own should be accepted.

The present debate in the General Assembly on the situation in the Middle East is taking place at a very critical juncture of the region's history. A setback to the current peace process would further deepen the already widespread frustration and despair. Such a development would aggravate the situation and lead to greater instability in the region, which in turn would pose a major threat to international peace and security. While sufficient reason exists for a degree of optimism, the current peace initiative is still at a preliminary stage. It is still too early to predict the direction that it will take.

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan))

The situation is so sensitive that the highest statesmanship and responsibility must be demonstrated, particularly by Israel, on whose goodwill and sincerity the success of the peace process will finally depend.

It is important, therefore, that the United Nations remain seized of the matter as well as actively involved in the international peace effort. It is incumbent on the Organization, as the custodian of world peace and security, to continue to exert every effort to ensure a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm Pakistan's continued support for the just cause of the Arab and Palestinian peoples. We join all fair-minded nations in the call for a just and comprehensive settlement on the basis of the return of all occupied Arab territories and the restitution of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. I would also like to take this occasion to reassure the Assembly of Pakistan's unwavering support of international efforts aimed at the achievement of such a settlement.

Mr. RUDI (Albania): The General Assembly has taken up for discussion the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East" three weeks after the Madrid peace conference on the Middle East, which, for the first time, laid the foundations for Arab-Israeli dialogue and broke the years-old deadlock. The results of the conference could have been greater. None the less, the very fact that the Arabs and the Iraelis broke away from old prejudices, shook hands with each other and sat at the negotiating table is of historic significance. The parties directly involved in the conflict

(Mr. Rudi, Albania)

demonstrated firm political will, tolerance, understanding and openness and won the sympathy and respect of international public opinion as a whole.

The Albanian delegation considers that this is a delicate phase which calls for the far-sightedness and wisdom necessary to overcome the many difficulties that have accumulated over the years on the road to peace and security in the region. However, it is our conviction that the parties to the conflict will be able to maintain the momentum and show the world once again their best values as the cradle of world civilization. We also welcome the diplomatic efforts of the United States and the Soviet Union, as co-sponsors of the conference; they paved the way for the start of the negotiations and are still trying to maintain the Madrid spirit by offering the most appropriate alternatives to the parties to the conflict to enable them to resume the talks as soon as possible.

A new era has been ushered in with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the Palestinian question, and the positive developments on the international scene will provide further inspiration. The main trend of present-day world developments is the settlement of disputes and conflicts through dialogue and reliance on the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, the international community is displaying ever-greater respect for and understanding of the aspirations of peoples to peace, independence, human rights and democratic freedoms.

It is our wish that the recently created favourable climate be maintained and strengthened and that the parties to the conflict refrain from taking actions or indulging in rhetoric and polemics that may aggravate the situation and undermine the peace process that has been initiated. It is very fragile and can be broken irretrievably. The continuation of the practices followed so

(Mr. Rudi, Albania)

far would do a disservice to the peace process, and the conflict would remain unsettled until the Greek calends, which would give rise to greater instability and tension in the region. If that were to happen, the Middle East region would continue to be a dangerous hotbed of confrontation fraught with unpredictable consequences for the countries of the region, of the Mediterranean and beyond.

One of the practices which directly damages the prospects for peace in the region is the continued construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied Arab territories in violation of the principle of "land for peace" and of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Israel's implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the Arab States' lifting of the trade boycott against Israel would be greatly conducive to the Arab-Israeli peace process, leading to a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict. All the parties to the conflict must recognize their shared responsibility to bring the talks to a successful conclusion.

This is a decisive moment for the Middle East. The opportunities for peace have never been greater. The Madrid peace conference and the forthcoming bilateral talks constitute a very good and favourable framework for the parties to the conflict to pave the way for the solution of the outstanding issues. But, in our opinion, insisting on another international peace conference on the Middle East without waiting for the results of the current peace process sounds like saying "no" to this peace process. The time has come for the countries involved in the conflict to address the situation with new attitudes in order to avoid the repetition of past mistakes and rise above the barriers of animosity.

(Mr. Rudi, Albania)

Apart from the role of the negotiating parties, it is of the utmost importance that the entire international community understand all the dimensions of the situation in the Middle East in order to place it in the right perspective, within the context of the movement of the present-day world towards a new international order.

Believing sincerely in the significance of constructive dialogue between the parties involved in the conflict, the Albanian Government has supported and supports all regional and international endeavours to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution acceptable to all the parties concerned so that they can live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

Mr. MOTHIBAMELE (Botswana): This debate is taking place at a time when our hopes have been raised by the coming together of the peoples of the Middle East at the Madrid conference. In a situation where the factions have been divided by a high wall, the mere fact that they are walking towards each other must be welcomed with an open heart.

To this end, we wish to thank the United States of America and the Soviet Union for having made it possible for the warring factions to meet in order to negotiate a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement through direct negotiations. We pinned our hopes on this conference because we are convinced that the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict can best be settled by the peoples of the Middle East. We pinned our hopes on this conference because we have always encouraged both sides to walk towards each other with an open mind, in a spirit of give-and-take.

(Mr. Mothibamele, Botswana)

We pinned our hopes on this Conference because, after almost 40 years of bloody conflict which often resulted in the killing of innocent civilians, women and children, at last the parties were going to sit down and talk to each other, for the time being throw verbal missiles.

The Madrid Conference did not bear fruit because some delegations went to the Conference with pre-conceived positions. The spirit of give and take was shelved until some unknown future.

Mankind welcomes the advent of the new world order, a world free of nuclear terror, a world safe to live in. It appears, however, that for the Palestinians, the core of the conflict in the Middle East, the fruits of the new world order are yet to come. To them, there is still darkness, the old order still prevails undiminished, uncompromising and determined to persist as though the winds of change are not blowing to change the shape and form of the world.

The Palestinians and other Arab neighbours of Israel seem ready to attend the peace conference wherever it is held. We welcome this attitude and would encourage Israel to do the same. Botswana, as a freedom-loving, peace-loving and justice-loving state, is disheartened at seeing people living under squalid conditions in crowded refugee camps. What is at issue in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people is the struggle for a birthright between two peoples whose claims to independent homelands in Palestine enjoy equal legitimacy. The people of Israel are entitled to be where they are in the pre-1967 State of Israel - a right Botswana has long recognized - a right which is not negotiable. The reality of Israel is not transitory but permanent.

(Mr. Mothibamele, Botswana)

In equal measure the people of Palestine are entitled to a homeland of their own on the West Bank and Gaza - an entitlement which is not negotiable, as is the entitlement of the peoples of Israel to a homeland of their own within the frontiers of pre-1967 Israel. In this context our unyielding support for the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence in a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza must be understood.

Botswana has followed with keen interest the intensive and often arduous bilateral diplomatic efforts of the past few months that ended with the parties agreeing to go to Madrid in order to set in train a negotiating process under the co-sponsorship of the United States and the Soviet Union aimed at achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement. We are further heartened to hear that there will be a follow-up of this conference in Washington next month. We encourage all concerned to go to Washington to negotiate peace. The momentum must not be lost. I have said that in a situation such as this, the spirit of give and take must be brought into play with each faction walking towards one another in order to meet in the middle. There must be concessions and compromises on each side. In fact we hope that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) will be allowed to sit in the conference in order to give a helping hand in the Middle East peacemaking process. In my delegation's view this is a sure recipe for an everlasting peace in the violent turbulence of the Middle East.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt): The Middle East region has been suffering an acute escalation of tension and confrontation over the past years as a result of Israel's occupation of Arab territories and its persistent refusal to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The General Assembly is today considering an item that has been on its agenda since the war of 1967. The consequences of that war still plague the Middle East region.

The persistence of the Arab-Israeli conflict over many years has deprived whole generations of the populations of the Middle East of the right to live in peace and stability. The conflict has also aggravated the feelings of suspicion, enmity and hatred between the parties of the dispute.

It is for this reason that all the peoples of the world have followed the convening of the Middle East peace conference in Madrid with general interest, as a new and historic turning-point in the peaceful march towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Madrid conference is a real opportunity that should not be missed, so that we can turn over the painful leaf of this conflict, lead the peoples of the region out of the cycle of wars, violence and suffering and look forward to the future with mature minds and open hearts.

Notwithstanding this significant development, we must stress here that the United Nations responsibility vis-à-vis the question of the Middle East still stands. The Organization has addressed all the aspects of the Arab-Israeli dispute and has adopted numerous resolutions in which it defined the parameters and means of establishing peace. The resolutions of the United Nations called upon Israel to withdraw, to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people and to abide by the principles of international law. Those resolutions have also affirmed the need to preserve the security of all the

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

countries of the region, including that of Israel, and the right of all those countries to live in peace as a cornerstone of the just peace that the international community is determined to achieve.

The Madrid conference has not been convened as if it were something that happened out of a vacuum. The basic principles of solving the Arab-Israeli dispute and achieving peace have been defined, as I have pointed out, by the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The general framework of the Madrid conference was formulated on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the Security Council, which, quite rightly, are considered the cornerstones of the conference.

The rules of contemporary international law are well established as regards occupation. The sum total of those rules establishes the fact that occupation is but a temporary physical situation that is not conducive to any transfer of the ownership of the occupied territories. The rules also stipulate the need not to recognize or acknowledge the consequences of occupation.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

The Declaration of the Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, which was adopted by the General Assembly in October 1970, says:

(spoke in English)

"The territory of a State shall not be the object of acquisition by another State resulting from the threat or use of force. No territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal." (resolution 2625 (XXV), annex, principle 1)

(spoke in Arabic)

All the forms of occupation of the territories of other States should be dealt with on an equal basis. There should not be any double standard in implementing that principle. Occupation, wherever it occurs, should be eliminated.

Attendance at the conference that began in Madrid should lead to a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine. The Arab delegations went to Madrid with open minds and hearts and a readiness for peace. Everybody is now looking forward to the outcome of the conference. The whole world is looking to the Government of Israel for a response to the call of peace. Egypt calls upon all parties to the conference to be realistic in addressing the issues before the conference and to deal with the framework of negotiations in a positive objective manner so that concrete applicable results may be achieved.

The peace that we are trying to establish in the Middle East should be based on solid foundations that are consonant with the rules of international legality. Foremost among those rules is the non-admissibility of the acquisition of territories by force. This is embodied in the "land for peace"

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

equation. The validity of that equation, which stems from the Charter of the United Nations, has been reaffirmed in Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Implementation of this important principle means full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in 1967, that is from Gaza, the West Bank, including East Al-Quds, and the Syrian Golan Heights - as well as its withdrawal from southern Lebanon in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

On the other hand, a just peace necessitates recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination. The right of peoples to self-determination is enshrined in the United Nations Charter and is affirmed in a number of instruments. On this occasion I shall refer only to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 1 (1) of which stipulates:

> "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." (resolution 2200 (XXI) A, annex)

A comprehensive, lasting and just peace is incompatible with Israel's persistence in its settlement policy in the occupied Arab territories. This policy runs counter to Israel's international contractual obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and is a real stumbling-block so far as the current peace endeavours are concerned. Therefore, Israel is called upon to halt its settlement policy immediately and to refrain from changing the demographic character of the occupied Arab territories. Any such change would be null and void and their effects could never be recognized legally. The occupying State is subject, during occupation, to established rules that

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

precisely define its duties. Those rules do not give Israel licence to apply in the occupied territories any measures that it may wish to impose.

In our view, the existence of a positive political will is the first guarantee that the parties to the Madrid peace conference will achieve the desired results. We hope that all the parties will demonstrate categorically - not by words but by deeds - that they are determined to achieve a just settlement that will ensure security and peace for all countries in the region in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations.

All the countries of the region should take the steps that are necessary to build confidence and eliminate danger. Especially necessary is a positive response to the initiative concerning disarmament in the Middle East region. First and foremost is the proposal that the region be freed from all weapons of mass destruction, as put forward by President Mubarak last April. I cite also the proposal that the Middle East be turned into a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Every year the General Assembly adopts unanimously a resolution to that effect. There is no doubt that the achievement of progress in this field will be a positive step towards the establishment of rules for the future, that would contribute to the containment of confrontation and enhance the chances of peace in the region.

It is high time we all worked together sincerely and faithfully to develop a framework for recognition of the reciprocal rights and duties of the parties to the conflict. After so many years of war and confrontation, the building of confidence will require pronounced efforts on the part of all of us.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

We look forward to peace, and we shall spare no effort to achieve it, to lay the basis for that peace within the framework of international legality, by reaching a comprehensive and just settlement of the question of Palestine in terms of land and rights, given the fact that the question of Palestine is the crux of the conflict.

Here, I should like to quote from the statement that Mr. Amr Moussa, Egypt's Minister for Foreign Affairs, made at the Madrid conference:

> "It is our duty to the peoples of the world not to give in to frustration or despair. We are not here simply to win; we are here to win, together, the greatest prize: peace - a prize that we should not lose or dismiss lightly".

We in Egypt have pioneered an experiment that has been successful in launching the process of peace in the Middle East. It was Egypt that took the initiative and opened the way to peace. It did this with the aim of achieving a comprehensive and just peace. And that is exactly the aspiration of the Palestinian people: a comprehensive and just peace. Undoubtedly it is the wish of the Israeli people and of the other peoples of the region. But the peace that will enable us all to enjoy stability and prosperity will not be established unless the rules of international legality are observed and used to ensure a better future for the peoples of the region.

Mr. HATANO (Japan): The year 1991 has witnessed truly important developments in the Middle East. The year began with a demonstration of international solidarity in response to the invasion of Kuwait. But of no less historic significance are the discussions now under way to find a solution to the situation in the Middle East. Indeed, there are grounds for cautious optimism that the Middle East, a region fraught with seemingly intractable problems, might not, after all, be impervious to the tide of peace, reconciliation and harmony among nations which has recently swept other parts of the world.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was an unconscionable act, in violation of all international norms. Japan condemned Iraq's action in no uncertain terms and joined the international community in calling for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Regrettably, Iraq did not heed the voice of the international community, and peace-loving nations around the world were obliged to join together to restore the sovereignty of Kuwait. The Government of Japan reiterates its profound admiration for all the men and women who courageously fought against the invasion. Japan is also proud of the role it played in support of the international effort by providing transport, materials, equipment and medical and financial assistance to the multinational forces in the Gulf; it also extended economic assistance to those States in the region that were most severely affected. The minesweepers provided by Japan continued their operations in the Persian Gulf for several months after the war ended.

The Government of Japan feels sympathy for the Iraqi people, particularly those in the south and the north who have been victimized by their own Government. That the Government of a sovereign State would by its own choice subject its citizens to the unspeakable suffering the people of Iraq

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

have experienced this past year is beyond comprehension. It is imperative that the Government of Iraq extend its full cooperation to the humanitarian activities of the various United Nations and non-governmental agencies that are making heroic efforts to ease the hardships of the Iraqi people.

Japan is encouraged by the peace conference that was recently held in Madrid and urges all parties concerned to continue their efforts to build upon the momentum generated by this historic undertaking. As I indicated in my statement last week, once direct bilateral talks are under way, Japan will participate in multilateral talks on regional issues in an effort to contribute to the welfare of all the peoples of the region. It is now of greatest importance that all parties eschew hostile rhetoric and refrain from taking any action that might jeopardize the peace talks.

The taking of hostages, for any cause or under any pretext, deserves categorical and universal condemnation. The Government of Japan welcomes the recent release of several Western hostages held in Lebanon and looks forward to the release of all remaining hostages without further delay. Japan pays particular tribute to the efforts of the Secretary-General and the various countries concerned that have resulted in the release of hostages.

The situation in southern Lebanon continues to be a source of international concern. In particular, Japan believes that the military actions of the Israeli forces against Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon are a serious obstacle to the peace process.

The restoration of peace and democracy in Lebanon remains an elusive goal, but it is a goal to which the Government of Lebanon has demonstrated its unswerving commitment. Japan reiterates its appeal to all sectors of the population to support President Elias Hrawi in his efforts to restore the unity, independence and sovereignty of Lebanon.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

The Middle East has a long and rich history as the crossroads of three continents. It spawned some of humankind's greatest civilizations and gave birth to three of the world's religions. Japan cannot but believe that the peoples that have inherited such glorious historical and cultural legacies will finally be able to find a way to live together in peace and harmony. The Government of Japan stands ready to utilize its own knowledge and experience to foster cordial relations among all the nations of the Middle East.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): As announced yesterday, consideration of agenda item 16, "Appointment of the Secretary-General", will take place on Tuesday, 3 December, at 10 a.m.

In order for the ceremony of appointment to proceed smoothly, I should like to state that, in accordance with usual practice, the number of speakers will be limited to the Chairmen of regional groups, the Chairman of the Group of Arab States and the representative of the host country. I would hope that each statement will not exceed 10 minutes.

I should also like to bring the following matter to the attention of the General Assembly. Representatives will recall that a mandatory deadline, not later than 1 December 1991, was established by the Assembly for the submission to the Fifth Committee of all draft resolutions with programme budget implications. I have received from the Chairman of the Third Committee a formal request for an extension of that deadline. He has requested an extension until 13 December 1991 in the event that any resolutions submitted under sub-item (b) of agenda item 94, "Crime prevention and criminal justice", might entail programme budget implications.

(The President)

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to extend the deadline in the manner I have just indicated?

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 35 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/46/586, A/46/623 and Corr.1, A/46/652)

Mr. CASTRO (Philippines): The Philippine delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the series of reports he has prepared for the proper consideration by the General Assembly of the item on "The situation in the Middle East". For in our desire to see a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East situation, we tend to overlook the important work and achievements of the United Nations in that troubled region. In peace-keeping, suffice it to mention the heroic efforts of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) to maintain regional peace no matter how precarious it may be. In the humanitarian care of refugees, the daily labours of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to alleviate the lot of Palestinians has won universal acclaim.

Five major wars in the Middle East have brought about not only violence and instability but also untold human suffering to the peoples of the region and to others who have gone there for purely economic reasons. At the same time, this unbridled resort to force has bred attitudes that hampered earlier initiatives in the quest for peace.

Fortunately, the first step on the long road to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East was taken at the historic three-day conference that began at Madrid and will, it is to be hoped, be continued at Washington until it finally finds its way to the shores of the Western Mediterranean and there spreads its bounties to the long-suffering peoples of the region.

(Mr. Castro, Philippines)

The negotiations will be protracted. There will be periods of doubt and uncertainty. But as long as the direct beneficiaries of peace have the will to forge for themselves the instruments to attain that noble end, there is a basis for hope and optimism.

As a charter-member of the United Nations, the Philippines reaffirms its abiding commitment to peace in the Middle East through peaceful negotiations. Indeed, if the parties concerned so desire, we are ready to participate in any process that will help accelerate the quest for a durable and comprehensive peace. Yearly in this forum we have invoked Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as the legal bases and frameworks for arriving at that elusive peace. It might be useful at this stage to elaborate the principles of international law embodied in these resolutions. But only the parties concerned could themselves negotiate the modalities and timetable for implementing these United Nations resolutions. During this delicate stage in the negotiations, the biggest contribution we could make would be to provide moral support to these long-awaited meetings of the parties themselves. Now that direct, face-to-face meetings have begun, attempts to impose any solution might be counter-productive. It might, however, be useful to recall that it was the Camp David process that initiated a breakthrough in direct negotiations between two hitherto antagonistic States in the Middle East. That we have now witnessed not only Egypt at the same conference table as Israel in Madrid, but also Syria, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, validates the formula for direct peace negotiations. *

While we are hopeful that the initiative taken jointly by the United States and the Soviet Union in convening the Madrid Middle East conference

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* Mr. Sanoussi (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Castro, Philippines)

will bring much-desired solutions, we should continue through our resolutions in the General Assembly to express our yearly concerns in that region. Moreover, we should also exert greater efforts to revitalize the work of the United Nations agencies on the ground. It is in this context that the Philippines welcomes the appointment of Ambassador Edouard Brunner of Switzerland as Special Representative to the Middle East. As Ambassador of the Philippines in Jordan, with concurrent accreditations to Syria and Lebanon, I am pleased to state that his recent visits to the region have revived the spirits of many. For indeed there is no substitute for a continuing United Nations presence until peace is finally restored in the Middle East. Let us therefore be steadfast in our support for the United Nations and the parties concerned so that the peaceful world envisaged in our Charter to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war may now be realized in the Middle East.

Mr. AKSIN (Turkey): For many years the General Assembly has had to deal in one way or another with the situation in the Middle East. In fact, for 44 years now, by virtue of the decision taken by the Assembly, our Organization has had to engage in a debate concerning the events in the Middle East, which have always been the object of intense concern throughout the world. This year we are engaged in the same debate once again. Although our agenda item remains the same, we are pleased to see that the political atmosphere of this year's debate is much more encouraging compared to the gloomy situation of last year owing to the invasion of Kuwait.

Since last year, the solidarity shown by the international community in overcoming the Gulf crisis has also fostered legitimate hopes for addressing and solving the other long-standing questions of the region. Within this context, the commendable efforts of the Government of the United States, in

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

close cooperation with the Government of the Soviet Union, have succeeded in gathering for the first time around the same negotiating table all the interested parties in the Middle East question. We believe that the most realistic evaluation of the conference after its opening phase would be to see its success in the determination of the parties to continue to discuss their problems at a bilateral level despite all their differences. In this process, the flexibility and realism of the Palestinians, and especially of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which made the holding of the conference possible, deserve our praise. This positive approach is testimony of their desire to engage in a dialogue and their readiness for a peaceful settlement.

It is obvious that the peace process will be difficult and long, with many ups and downs. It will require patience and courage on the part of all participants. We sincerely hope that this opportunity will be properly evaluated and that the conference will contribute to the establishment, as early as possible, of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

During the course of this century the Middle East has been one of the most tormented regions of the world. Owing to unresolved conflicts, this region's rich resources have been wasted in large measure for military purposes while many of the needs of the people who have lived in hardship and suffering have remained unmet.

We hope that the success of the Madrid conference will also reverse this trend. A successful outcome of the peace process will eliminate some of the mistrust in the region and open the way to increased cooperation in all fields. Because of the complementary nature of their economies and the similarity of their cultures, the possibilities for regional cooperation are very promising.

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

We believe that solidarity built upon a sound foundation of cooperation and interdependence will strengthen the atmosphere of confidence and contribute to the stability and security of the region. In this spirit, Turkey has informed all the interested parties of its desire to take part in the third stage of the Madrid conference dealing with regional projects of cooperation and has expressed its readiness to host this stage of the peace process.

By virtue of its geographical location and its historical ties to the Middle East, the fate of the people of this region, and especially the fate of the Palestinian people, are of particular interest to Turkey. The question of Palestine is one of the most tragic and certainly one of the most complex problems with which the United Nations has had to deal. It is not simply a question of refugees or a massive violation of human rights. It is a most serious political problem which constitutes the core of the Middle East question. For this reason, we believe that any initiative aimed at giving a new impetus to the search for a just and lasting overall settlement in the Middle East, should focus on safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the Palestinian people, as well as the legitimate rights of all the interested parties.

My Government's position regarding the elements of a solution remains unchanged. Turkey holds the view that a lasting and equitable solution of the question of Palestine depends on the withdrawal of Israel from all of the Arab territories it has occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and the recognition of the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to live within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

Turkey has consistently advocated a just settlement of the problem of Palestinian refugees who have undergone untold suffering for more than four decades.

As long as a peaceful settlement has not been reached, we feel duty-bound to call on the international community to extend its active support to the measures aimed at alleviating the plight of the Palestinian people. We do this with the understanding that the relief measures to be adopted cannot be seen as an alternative to the political solution of the question. Indeed, the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People as well as the report of the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East clearly demonstrate that the Israeli authorities continue to resort to a variety of harsh and arbitrary measures in their efforts to suppress the intifadah. These measures, including deportation, mass arrests, detention, raids on homes and villages and confiscation of property, constitute a clear violation of the relevant principles and provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In conformity with Security Council resolutions 673 (1990) and 681 (1990), Israel should accept the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories and abide by its provisions.

The continued Israeli policy of settlement in the occupied territories should also be considered within the provisions of the same Convention. Israel shoud stop establishing new settlements, not only because it is a State Party to the Fourth Geneva Convention, but also in order to demonstrate its readiness to contribute positively to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to further negotiations within the framework of the peace process initiated by the Madrid conference.

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

The universal reaction to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the ensuing Gulf crisis demonstrated the resolve of the international community to safeguard the validity of the principle of international legality. The crisis tested and proved the effectiveness of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security. This is something we should all welcome. We must note, however, that due to the policies pursued by Iraq, together with the unsettled situation in the northern part of that country, the region is far from being peaceful and stable.

Iraq must comply fully with all Security Council resolutions. This is a prerequisite to correcting the precarious situation in the region resulting from the Gulf war. The international community should do all it can to restore normalcy to the region in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis.

My Government firmly believes that the preservation of the territorial integrity of Iraq is of the utmost importance in preventing the emergence of new conflicts in the region. Our desire is to see in neighboring Iraq a pluralistic regime, respectful of human rights, whereby all the peoples in this country, whether they be Arabs, Kurds, Turcomans or Christians, may live in tranquility and security.

Debate on the Middle East requires us to say a few words on the situation in Lebanon. Turkey believes that a just and lasting solution to the question of Lebanon can only be found through national reconciliation and on the basis of the principle of preserving the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. Turkey considers the Taif agreement to be an essential step in this direction.

The formation of a National Reconciliation Government, reintegration to civil life of a majority of the militias and the efforts of the Lebanese

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

Government towards extending its sovereignty over all of Lebanon are constructive steps towards the implementation of the Taif agreement.

Turkey considers the agreement reached between the Lebanese Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization for the deployment of the Lebanese Army in southern Lebanon a major step towards peace and stability in this country. In the light of this development, we firmly believe that there is no good excuse for Israel not to withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon, in compliance with the United Nations Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Mr. Abdul GHAFFAR (Bahrain) (interpretation from Arabic): We can trace the roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict to these two factors: the continued adherence by Israeli politicians to the ideology of expansion and settlement and the refusal to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The facts of history have shown that Israel's first leaders were not given to dreaming empty dreams in adhering to that ideology. Quite to the contrary, they have tried to realize those dreams by preparing the ground for repeated aggression against the Arab States.

This has been highlighted in an article that was published by Mordecai Basok in Al-Hamishmar on 9 September 1982. Basok tells us that Mr. Begin, the former Prime Minister of Israel, swore before the Israeli Knesset that Ben-Gurion had proposed to France and Britain the occupation of the West Bank in the course of the Tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1956. As a matter of fact, Ben-Gurion had always had dreams of expansion in and annexation of Arab territories even before the establishment of the Jewish State. After the twentieth Zionist conference in Zurich, in August 1937, he stated, in a newspaper interview:

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

(spoke in English)

"The debate has not been for or against the indivisibility of Eretz Israel. No Zionist can forego the smallest portion of Eretz Israel. The debate was over which of two roads would lead more quickly to the common goal."

(spoke in Arabic)

Oded Yinon, former Israeli diplomat wrote a study entitled "Strategy for Israel in the 1980s" which appeared in the February 1982 issue of Kivunim, the quarterly of world zionism, in which he called for the annulment of the Camp David Agreements with Egypt and the reoccupation of the Sinai.

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

He called upon Israel to destabilize the Arab States with a view to fragmenting and marginalizing them to an extent that would ensure Israeli hegemony over the region. These fanatical views we come upon from time to time in the writings of Zionist extremists should not be dismissed lightly.

In his outstanding work, The Fateful Triangle, Professor Noam Chomsky alerts us to the fact that no matter how:

(spoke in English)

"Extreme these views may be, they are not out of the political mainstream, and they may sooner or later come to dominate it in the natural course of events. The entire history of Zionism and later the State of Israel, particularly since 1967, is one of gradual shift towards the positions of those formerly regarded as right-wing extremists; consider, for example, the general attitude in earlier days towards the current terrorist leadership, Begin, Shamir, et al., and their actions and doctrines."

If one looks closely at the changes that have taken place in the march of the Arab-Israeli conflict, one will note that the Arab States have developed a vision of coexistence with Israel. Since the beginning of the seventies, they have continued to put forward one peace initiative after the other. However, the leaders of Israel have continued to reject every initiative. Israel not only rejected those Arab initiatives, but also rejected every initiative by the successive United States Administrations, the Soviet Union and the States of Western Europe. This adamant refusal on the part of Israeli politicians stemmed from the fact that those initiatives called for compliance with the behests of international legality embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

That is the reason why every peace initiative caused such panic and upset the Israeli authorities. The Israeli writer Amos Elon wrote an article to this effect in the Ha'aretz issue of 13 November 1981, wherein he described the dismay of Israeli leaders when President Sadat of Egypt in 1971 took the initiative of calling for the conclusion of a peace treaty with Israel on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and security guarantees for Israel within recognized borders. It appears that the Israeli writer did not exaggerate when he spoke of the panic caused by an offer of peace. The international community has had occasion to see for itself how Israel tried to create every possible obstacle and hurdle with a view to preventing the convening of the Madrid conference. It was only the determination of the United States Administration and the support of the international community that made it possible to convene that conference which is a positive step in the right direction for the resolution of the question of Palestine and that of the Middle East.

The crisis of the Israeli political system is caused by the adoption of leaders of Israel of the intellectual and ideological dogmas of Zionist thought that, under the weight of exclusivist beliefs, draws sustenance from the principle of superiority embodied in the claim that the Jews are a chosen people that is above all others. This is an isolationist view that is not conducive to the formulation of thought patterns or a multidimensional outlook that may lead to coexistence. And even if it did, as a matter of expediency, the doctrine looks down upon others from on high. Hence the inability of such an intellectual/ideological system to take cognizance of its broader environment or take into account its historical milieu.

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

That is the reason why the Israelis keep on taking us back 4,000 years into the past and try to use this sort of time travel in validating their claims while they wipe the slate clean of every last vestige of the histories of other peoples, as if the movement of history in the Arab region was naught but the comings and goings of the Israelites. This type of thinking can be found, very glaringly indeed, in an article by Yitzhak Shamir in the Foreign Affairs quarterly issue No. 66 of 1988

(spoke in English)

"One of Isreal's leading poets wrote recently that the State of Israel is the realization of the greatest collective effort of the Jewish people since Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt."

(spoke in Arabic)

Most definitely, such an erroneous interpretation of history cannot be conducive to the development of any positive view that may lead to coexistence with the peoples of the region. This is a narrow minded, unidimensional interpretation that is locked upon itself. No matter how seductive this may be, historical realities fly in the face of the dogmas and concepts that give rise to such beliefs. In a moment of awareness, after 50 years in the service of the world Zionist organization, Nahum Goldman discovered for himself those facts which the Israelis have tried to falsify. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of Israel, he wrote in the Foreign Affairs issue of April 1970:

(spoke in English)

"As far as the relations with the Arab world are concerned, it was one of the shortcomings of the Zionist movement that, in its early years, it did not fully realize the gravity and importance of this problem.

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

Theodor Herzel, the author of the Judenstaat (the Jewish State) and founder of the Zionist movement, once said that the Zionist idea is a very simple one - that all it has to do is to 'transport a people without a country to a country without a people'."

(spoke in Arabic)

He also wrote:

(continued in English)

"It is worthwhile to note here that in Jewish history, with its many encounters with countless peoples, States and civilizations, the Arab-Jewish rencontre was much more human and fair than the instances of the Jewish-Christian relations. The great Arab-Jewish civilization in Spain, and the freedom of life and creativeness of Jewish communities in many Moslem countries in the past, may encourage the hope of a positive Arab reaction to this solution of the problem."

(spoke in Arabic)

Israel's position regarding the Syrian Golan has not changed to this date. It continues to be a position of non-compliance with Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions that consider the annexation of the Syrian Arab Golan as illegal. The Israeli occupation authorities are still intent on changing the demographic composition and the very character of the Golan and are building more settlements there. It is worth noting here that the Ministry of Housing in Israel has allocated 36 per cent of its 1990 budget to the building of new houses for settlers in the West Bank and in the Syrian Golan. In Washington, a few months ago, a member of the Israeli Cabinet hinted that "the Golan may be negotiable". Thereafter, the Boston Globe of 19 March 1991 reported that Yitzhak Shamir had clarified that statement as follows:

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

(spoke in English)

"What the Minister meant to say was that if there are negotiations with Israel, they [the Syrians] will meet and can say to us: 'We want the Golan' and we will say 'We won't give them to you'. That's negotiations."

(spoke in Arabic)

It is unfortunate indeed that the Israeli Knesset saw fit to adopt a decision on 11 November 1991 that considers the occupied Syrian Golan "unnegotiable".

Bahrain has voiced its regret and displeasure that such a decision should have been taken. A responsible source in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stated that Israel's adoption of such an illegal decision was meant to obstruct the peace process at a time when the United States, the Soviet Union and the international community are making sincere efforts to ensure the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

Bahrain calls upon the international community to put an end to those Israeli practices which aim at dashing the hopes of peace, and undermining the peace process that may put an end to the Arab-Israeli dispute and thereby restore peace to a region which has not enjoyed security and stability for decades.

As regards Lebanon, the Israeli forces continue to shell the Lebanese villages from time to time and thereby force their inhabitants to flee to other areas. This clearly demonstrates that Israel is flouting Security Council resolution 425 (1978) which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanese territory. This means that we must call upon the international community to deter Israel and force it to desist from its unending incursions into Lebanese territory.

The problem of war and peace in the Middle East calls for a clear understanding that would promote peace and establish channels for dialogue between the interested parties. The accumulated residues of the past are full of tragedy, especially in the case of the Palestinian people which has been driven from its homeland and has been forced to live in refugee camps and in countries of the diaspora. These facts should move the international community and the co-chairmen of the Peace Conference, that is, the United States and the Soviet Union, to forge ahead with the peace process and encourage the adoption of new concepts and ideas so that the interested parties may be able to define a logic of coexistence based on justice with a view to finding a comprehensive and lasting solution to the problem of the Middle East.

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

On the other hand, the international community must urge Israel to shed the confining mould of its ideological expansionist ideas which are bound to keep Israel on the periphery of history in the region as long as it clings to force and hegemony.

Mr. BENDJAMA (Algeria) (interpretation from French): The General Assembly has resumed its consideration of the situation in the Middle East at a time when the developments in that region give us grounds for hope but also for deep concern. There are grounds for hope because after four decades of a turbulent history marked by several major conflicts and the constant threat of a generalized explosion, the Middle East finally seems to be benefiting from sincere and praiseworthy efforts to bring about an overall settlement of the conflict and to tackle its essential dimension - the question of Palestine - as emphasized in the letter of invitation to the Madrid peace conference, which stated that its purpose was a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. But we have grounds also for deep concern because the hope that might arise from these developments, crowned by the first meeting at Madrid, is contradicted by the situation in the occupied Arab territories and by Israel's unrelenting arrogance towards the Arab countries.

It is significant that precisely when the Madrid Conference was being held, the Israeli army intensified its bombardments of southern Lebanon; the Syrian Golan Heights became the target of new attempts at Zionization approved by the Knesset itself; and, finally, the intifadah of the Palestinian people was the object of even more severe repression. In other words, for Israel peace in the Middle East has absolutely nothing to do with the Arab territories it occupies, nor with the Arab peoples that it is subjugating, nor with the most elementary principles of law and unanimous decisions of the Security Council.

(Mr. Bendjama, Algeria)

Since the facts of the Middle East conflict are well known and have been defined for some time now, the bases and objectives of a lasting settlement of this conflict have been identified by the vast majority of our General Assembly. The history of that region teaches us that it is precisely because we have disregarded these obvious facts that all previous attempts to settle the matter have not succeeded. It is up to us today to emphasize once again what these elements are.

First, a settlement is conceivable and possible only if it leads to Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem. This is a fact that can never be overemphasized. We can never acquiesce in the fait accompli represented by Israel's occupation of the Arab territories. That occupation is continuing, and therefore our determination to put an end to it can only be strengthened. More than 10 years ago Israel purely and simply decided on its own that the Syrian Golan Heights and Jerusalem were an integral part of what it calls "Greater Israel", whose territorial limits no one really knows. As if that were not enough, Israel has relentlessly pursued an official, sustained and massive policy of colonizing the Arab territories. Apart from its illegal nature, the establishment of colonies is an insurmountable obstacle on the already very difficult road to peace. Peace will be impossible and the process under way will be devoid of any meaning if this settlement policy is not ended.

Secondly, the central element of the Middle East conflict is the Palestinian question. A process can be described as a settlement process only if it includes among its objectives the full exercise by the Palestinian people of their national rights. For more than four decades now that people has been constantly demanding and struggling for the restoration of its national rights in its homeland. The fact that the intifadah has been going

(Mr. Bendjama, Algeria)

on for four years is the best proof of that people's determination to live in freedom and independence.

Of course, in the meantime it is up to the international community to ensure that the suffering endured by the Palestinian people because of the brutal repression by the forces of occupation is attenuated. This is not only a moral duty but also a legal obligation under the Fourth Geneva Convention. In this connection, we must point out that these inhuman practices carried out against that people are linked to the persistent negation of the fact that the Palestinian nation exists. This is proved by the occupier's indulgence in every possible excess in repression, dispossession and punishment; everything that ties the Palestinian to his homeland is thus the object of the occupier's rage. This is also proved by the repression of the intifadah. Finally, it is proved by the confiscation and dispossession of the goods, resources and lands of the Arabs.

Thirdly, a settlement is conceivable only if Israel ceases its attempts to modify the demographic composition and to distort the Arab character of the occupied territories. In the Syrian Golan Heights, but also and above all in Jerusalem, this policy has reached unparalleled proportions. In this connection one cannot overemphasize the importance of Al-Quds - Jerusalem - for all Arabs and for all the revealed religions, and its sacred, Arab character cannot be left indefinitely to the mercy and good will of any occupier.

(Mr. Bendjama, Algeria)

Parts of our sister territory of Lebanon are still occupied by Israel. It is our duty to denounce and condemn as vigorously as we can the continuing occupation of that country. It is also the international community's duty not to grow accustomed to this situation. It is intolerable and should not be tolerated. No interpretation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) is authorized other than as a call for Israel's immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal. The speedy implementation of resolution 425 (1978) is not subject to negotiation, nor can it be conditional upon developments in the process of reaching a global settlement of the Middle East conflict.

In various conflicts throughout the world, peace has often been the result of joint, collective and concerted efforts by the entire international community, whether through the General Assembly or through the Security Council.

The involvement of the United Nations in the settlement of these conflicts has always been effective and has often proved to be decisive in ending them. The Organization has always been able at various stages in the process of settling these conflicts to provide the necessary impetus and to create the best possible technical conditions. When the settlement has finally been achieved, the United Nations has above all served as a safeguard for stability and durability.

In the current settlement process in the Middle East the United Nations deserves to be used, with all its possibilities and all its resources. It has the moral backing of the entire international community, and this backing can in itself engender further efforts to achieve peace.

(Mr. Bendjama, Algeria)

The involvement of the United Nations has even become a duty given the new role it was assigned to play in restoring law and justice when the principles of the non-acquisition of territory by force and the integrity and sovereignty of States were called into question in the very same region of the Middle East. The United Nations at that time decided to take exceptional steps to ensure respect for the essential principles of international law which are themselves the very foundation of peace and stability. The United Nations therefore cannot do less than demand the implementation of its resolutions. Dealing in a different way with similar situations will not only reduce the Organization's credibility but also, indeed above all, endanger international peace and security.

Mr. RAZALI (Malaysia): The last few years have seen dramatic changes in international relations, and there is a clear trend in favour of settling regional disputes by peaceful means. The ugliness of the Gulf War and its repercussions further underlined the importance of peaceful solutions to conflicts.

The need for peace is most obvious in the volatile and heavily armed region of the world that is the Middle East. But real and lasting peace in the Middle East can be achieved only when there is a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, at the heart of which is the Palestinian problem.

For more than 40 years now justice and peace have eluded the Palestinian people. They continue their quest to exercise their right to self-determination, including the right to an independent Palestinian State. Repeatedly, efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just peace have failed, while Israel continues its occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories and

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

ignores various Security Council resolutions including 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

With the new spirit of international cooperation and of upholding the rule of law, a peace process concerning the Middle East and the Palestinian issue is now under way, beginning with the Madrid peace conference. This is the most serious and promising peace effort in years. We should like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the initiative taken by President Bush and Secretary of State Baker to pursue this effort, and we hope that the United States leadership will this time around persevere in order to ensure a successful end to the peace process.

To the Arab countries concerned we should like to pay our tribute for their foresightedness and wisdom in participating in the peace process. The Palestinian people and their leadership also deserve credit for taking the difficult decision to engage in the peace process. We are particularly encouraged by the diplomatic skills demonstrated by Palestinian leadership attending the Madrid peace conference as well as by those outside, which have helped to win a tremendous amount of goodwill for their just cause.

The stance taken by the Israeli negotiators, however, has been a big disappointment; unbending and arrogant, it is reminiscent of the outdated days of the cold war. Further, the Israelis' act of defiance in building illegal Jewish settlements on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights right in the midst of the Madrid conference only aggravated the situation further. This unnecessarily provocative, anti-peace action is totally out of step with the desire of those Israelis who want peace. Only the Israeli Government leaders seem unmoved by the concern of a large segment of the population about the

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

degenerative influence on Jewish society of maintaining illegal occupation with recourse to inhumane methods.

We are all fully aware that real and lasting peace is more than just the absence of war. Our own experience in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) points to the importance of regional cooperation, channeling the resources of the region to social and economic development. Like any other region, the Middle East can galvanize all its dynamism only when a situation of peace allows it to maximize the resources and potential of all its peoples as full participants in government and society. The Middle East is not immune to change and cannot continue indefinitely as the number-one intractable problem of peace and security in the world. The current peace process in the Middle East provides an opening, however fragile, to establish a framework for regional cooperation, but it is unreasonable to expect the Arabs, including the Palestinians, to support the idea fully when Israel's stand and signals so far have been uncompromising on the essential elements of returning the occupied lands for peace.

At the last session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General pointed out in his report:

> "The Middle East as a whole continues to be the most explosive region of the world today. Longstanding grievances, which have festered for years, have been aggravated by an escalating arms race throughout the area, which has spawned a deadly arsenal of weapons of mass destruction." (A/45/1, sect. II, 36th para.)

The events that have unfolded in the Gulf since then have validated the Secretary-General's statement.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

There is an obvious need to prevent an accumulation of arms in the region beyond a reasonable level needed for self-defence. Exporting countries, which preach so much about peace and the need to have some measure of control over arms sales to volatile regions of the world, must match their words with deeds. Even after the Gulf experience, we see contradictions, as if these countries have not learned the lessons of history; they appear quite oblivious to the crying need for the much-discussed peace dividend to finance development, which is the best and surest way to achieve peace. In this connection, the Permanent Five of the Security Council must be reminded that by virtue of their position in that body, and as the largest arms exporters, they carry a heavy and special responsibility to prevent excessive accumulation of arms and to assist in redirecting resources to social and economic development instead.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

The widespread belief that Israel possesses nuclear weapons has for many years aroused serious fears in the countries of the region and has contributed to a large extent to the arms build-up, including attempts at acquiring nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction to counter the threat. For this reason, Malaysia supports the early establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of all types of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. In this connection, the accession of all countries in the region to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be decisive in speeding up the process of establishing such a zone. Malaysia joins in calling upon all countries in the region, particularly Israel, pending and during the establishment of the zone, to agree to place all their nuclear activities and facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). There is no reason why the United Nations should be less committed to ensuring IAEA inspection of Israeli nuclear facilities, given the fear and sense of insecurity in the region over Israeli nuclear capabilities.

Mr. WILENSKI (Australia): There are few items on the Assembly's agenda that raise the same complex historical and political issues as the one we are now considering. The search for lasting peace and stability in the Middle East region, which has too often been beset by violence and unrest, has long seemed elusive. Entrenched positions and lack of any dialogue between the parties have in the past held out little hope of a comprehensive and lasting solution to the region's problems. Recent events, however, give cause for guarded optimism that movement in resolving longstanding problems may now be possible.

Our debate this year is taking place under very different circumstances

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

from those of last year. At this time last year, the United Nations and the international community were focused on reversing Iraq's invasion and purported annexation of Kuwait - an invasion that caused incalculable human suffering and economic hardship in the region.

Thanks to the prompt and determined action of the international community, acting through the Security Council, the Iraqi aggression was reversed and Kuwait's sovereignty restored. The United Nations continues to play an important role in preventing Iraq from again threatening its neighbours and destabilizing the region. Australia fully supports the Special Commission's efforts to dismantle Iraq's offensive military capacity. The United Nations also has a crucial continuing humanitarian role in Iraq, based on Security Council resolution 688 (1991). We are pleased that the memorandum of understanding negotiated between the Secretary-General's Executive Delegate and the Government of Iraq has been extended for a further six months. Real relief for the Iraqi people, however, is in the hands of the Government of Iraq. We urge the authorities of Iraq to cooperate with Security Council resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991), which provide the means for Iraq to resume oil exports in order for it to meet its essential civilian needs.

In another positive change from the situation prevailing in the Middle East last year, there has been a welcome lessening of violence in Lebanon. We commend the continuing efforts made by the Government of Lebanon in accordance with the Taif Agreement to stabilize the situation further and to extend its authority throughout Lebanon.

These positive developments underscore the fundamental changes that the end of the cold war and the move from super-Power rivalry to cooperation have meant for international relations. Not only is the international community

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

far more prepared to mobilize effectively in order to address threats to international peace and security as they arise, but also problems that have long been intractable are now being successfully tackled.

We welcome the fact that this positive change in international relations is now being felt in the long-running Middle East conflict. We are meeting here today in the immediate aftermath of the successful convening of the Madrid conference on the Middle East, where, for the first time, all the parties to the Middle East conflict met together and initiated a process of dialogue.

The Government of Australia pays a tribute to the United States and Soviet co-sponsors of the peace conference on the Middle East for their efforts towards facilitating negotiations between the parties. The tireless efforts made by Mr. Baker, the Secretary of State of the United States, deserve particular praise. The Madrid conference was a major achievement, which brought credit both to the sponsors and to the participants.

The process initiated by the United States and the Soviet Union provides the first real hope for years that the parties to the Middle East conflict may be able to reach agreement enabling them all to live in peace and stability within secure and recognized boundaries. We call upon all the parties to respond positively and wholeheartedly to the invitation to renew bilateral talks at the beginning of next month, and we look forward to a successful series of multilateral regional talks to deal with crucial arms-control and security issues, as well as questions of human resources. Both the direct bilateral and the multilateral regional phases of the process offer hope of substantive progress in lessening tensions in the region and establishing a pattern of negotiation and cooperation.

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

Australia's policy on the Middle East is based on two main premises: a total commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries; and recognition of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent State. Australia has for many years supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 war and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty of every State in the region and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries. It is our hope that the Madrid peace process will indeed lead to such a comprehensive settlement.

Nobody underestimates the difficulties that will be involved in the negotiating process after 43 years of bitter enmity and four bloody and destructive wars. We are only at the start of what is likely to be a lengthy and intense process. But the successful negotiations between Israel and Egypt in 1978 demonstrate how much can be achieved through patience, good will and a positive approach.

We urge the parties to continue the negotiations with good will and a flexible approach and to refrain from any action that might jeopardize the prospects for continued negotiations. In this context, the cycle of attacks and counter-attacks in southern Lebanon and Israel's apparent determination to continue to establish settlements in the occupied territories are decidedly unhelpful. Australia considers that such settlements are contrary to international law, and has repeatedly made representations to the Government of Israel for a halt to the settlements. We also urge the Arab States to lift

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

their boycott of Israel as a valuable confidence-building measure that would promote the prospects for peace.

It is our hope that at this time next year the General Assembly's debate on the situation in the Middle East will have seen further progress in achieving a durable peace in the region.

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

Before concluding, I wish to touch briefly on one other issue of relevance to the item under discussion today, namely the continued existence of resolution 3379 (XXX) equating Zionism with racism on the United Nations books. Successive Australian Governments have, since the resolution's adoption, argued for its repeal. We do so again today. Australia urges all United Nations Members to support the repeal of this offensive resolution at the earliest possible date.

Mr. ERDOS (Hungary) (interpretation from French): Hungary maintains very close and multiform political, economic and cultural relations with the States and peoples of the Middle East region. These close relationships as well as our geographic proximity also explain why we are so concerned about eliminating the state of confrontation in the Middle East and achieving a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict. In other words, we seek to establish peace in a region where for decades the ravages of war, the nightmare of terrorism, the taking of hostages, and extremist and intolerant attitudes, injustice and instability have continued to cause terrible hardships to the civilian populations. As a result of the lack of dialogue and efforts at a valid settlement, the problems accumulated over the years have become extremely serious. The Middle East has thus remained an area where the facts of confrontation and virulent tension continue to predominate and where the favourable processes witnessed elsewhere in the world have proved to be incapable of making any headway.

Thus, we are all the more pleased to note that as a result of the assiduous diplomatic efforts made in recent months a Middle East peace conference has been convened in Madrid in order to bring about a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

(Mr. Erdos, Hungary)

Although the Madrid conference and the activities resulting from it are taking place outside the framework of the United Nations, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) are, the participants agree, the foundation of this negotiating process. These are resolutions recognized by the international community as being the cornerstone of any viable settlement for the Middle East.

Furthermore, the purposes of the Madrid conference hinge upon a number of principles which were formulated for the first time in the United Nations. Thus, beyond the settlement of the Palestinian question through the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate political rights, peace and stability in the region will also have to include an end to the state of war between the Arab States and Israel and the commitment to reject the use of force, to settle disputes peacefully and to respect the territorial integrity of all States, including Israel.

The delegation of Hungary earnestly hopes that the process initiated by the negotiations that took place in Madrid can be sustained and, through the historic courage and open-mindedness of the participants, to whom we would like to pay a heartfelt tribute, that a just and durable peace will no longer be an impossible dream but become a daily reality for the countries of the Middle East.

The convening of the Madrid conference was greatly facilitated by the end of the war to liberate Kuwait and by the firm and effective international action taken to tackle that aggression in the Gulf. Hungary was deeply gratified to welcome the restoration of the sovereignty and independence of the State of Kuwait, the triumph of international legality over the law of the jungle. The solidarity and determination shown by Members of the United

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Nations throughout that crisis constitute a serious and unequivocal warning to any potential aggressor.

Hungary welcomes the efforts made by the Security Council, the Secretary-General and his colleagues to devise an appropriate structure to deal with the problems relating to the Gulf conflict and its aftermath. We believe that it is extremely important for the pertinent resolutions of the Security Council to be fully implemented, including those intended to ensure respect for and, if necessary, the imposition of security and disarmament measures and the provision of compensation or humanitarian assistance. We are particularly disturbed by the situation of the civilians in Iraq, particularly the Kurds and the Shiites. The brutal repression that has been visited upon them has caused a huge wave of refugees to neighbouring countries. Hungary is acutely aware of the violation of human rights and the rights of minorities, wherever such a violation takes place and considers that Iraq's policy in this field is unacceptable and contrary to the norms of international law. We favour the immediate and unconditional implementation of Security Council resolution 688 (1991). We fully support the appeal of the Secretary-General in favour of the civilian population of Iraq. We have an identical view with respect to resolution 706 (1991) adopted by the Security Council in order to mitigate the sufferings of the Iraqi people. We also welcome the fact that humanitarian operations by the United Nations are still going on in Iraq.

For the same humanitarian reasons, Hungary is also very much disturbed by the situation prevailing in the territories occupied by Israel, which has an adverse impact on the living conditions of the Palestinian people and is hampering their economic and social development. We believe that the implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention is a sine qua non for protecting civilian populations and improving their lot. Hungary supports all

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the efforts made by the Security Council and the Secretary-General in order to prevent a recurrence of violence in the occupied territories. We welcome the recent reduction in the number of violent confrontations as well as the willingness of both sides to adopt more realistic attitudes.

Unfortunately, the impact of the situation in the Middle East and the absence of solutions to the numerous problems arising in that area necessarily impinge on the different areas of international life. I am sorry to have to inform this Assembly that quite recently an important international conference, the conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent which was to have been held at the end of November in Budapest, has itself become a victim of the problems linked to the Middle East conflict, since it has likewise become a hostage to unresolved questions. Not only as a country hosting a major intergovernmental event of a humanitarian nature which has just been delayed but also as a member of the community of nations desirous of bringing about peace in that region, we deeply regret that we have missed the opportunity to deal in detail with one of the most important questions arising in crises: how to protect innocent populations and how to apply international humanitarian law in the case of armed conflicts. This galling experience should prompt us all to redouble our efforts to reach a final settlement in the Middle East.

Our delegation welcomes the fact that in Lebanon a favourable process has been observed in the past year. We would like to express our hope that recent developments in Lebanon will help to consolidate national reconciliation and lead to the full implementation of the Taif agreements, thus bringing about the complete restoration of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of a Lebanon free from all foreign forces and enabling the Lebanese people to express their will in democratic elections.

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With the convening of the Madrid conference, a historic opportunity has arisen that might lead to a settlement of the Middle East conflict acceptable to all parties concerned. Here, at the United Nations, we should remain aware of the negotiating process. The current session of the General Assembly can and should contribute to a climate conducive to the continuation of negotiations and the gradual elimination of the obstacles that still beset the negotiation process. In this context, Hungary considers it of particular importance to repeal General Assembly resolution 3379 (XXX). This action is needed both to heighten the authority and credibility of the United Nations and to build the necessary confidence between the parties. We should not allow such unhappy temptations, originating from different quarters but united in their barren purposes, and which foster in some illusions as to the real feelings on this subject in the United Nations and in the world, and encourage others to hide behind inflexible barriers and use the existence of the resolution as a pretext, albeit ephemeral, to try and undermine chances for normalizing the Middle East situation. Let us therefore rid ourselves without delay of this legacy of a past that we hope is vanished for ever.

Our delegation is aware that confidence between the parties to the conflict can also be strengthened in other ways. We favour everything that might promote dialogue and reject everything that might hinder it. The termination of the settlements policy and the abandonment of the commercial boycott of Israel might serve as important points of departure for creating and consolidating the necessary confidence for the successful pursuit of negotiations.

We believe that the resolutions of the General Assembly should serve not to isolate and pillory one or other of the parties but rather to promote

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political communication between them. The same balanced approach should be adopted with activities and efforts designed to expand the work of the different United Nations bodies concerned with the problems of this region. The way to make a valuable contribution to the peace process in the Middle East is not by adopting partisan positions and propaganda-based attitudes but by encouraging contacts and dialogue.

Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukraine) (interpretation from Russian): Our discussion of the situation in the Middle East once again demonstrates the deep concern of the international community over a situation in which the violence still goes on, year after year, and there is continuing instability in a region which has already experienced five major wars. The events and trends in one part of that region necessarily produce serious consequences in its other parts and in the international situation as a whole. It is generally acknowledged that there is a need to explore ways and means of overcoming the obstacles that for decades now have made it impossible to attain a just and lasting peace in that part of the world. It is also generally acknowledged that the absence of an active negotiating process recognized by all parties to the conflict leads simply to a further deterioration of the situation and more suffering for the peoples of the Middle East.

The Persian Gulf crisis, which broke out at a time of considerable improvements in the political life of the world and notable changes in approaches to the solution of global problems, was a serious test of the durability of the new thinking and the capacity of existing machinery for multilateral cooperation, first and foremost that of the United Nations. It confirmed once again that the process of settlement of regional conflicts is

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still far from finished and that relapses into policies conducted from a position of strength are still a threat to international peace and security.

The Iraq-Kuwait conflict forced the entire world community again to realize that the growing interdependence of States manifests itself not only in its positive aspects but also, perhaps even more acutely, in its negative ones; there is virtually no country in the world that did not experience the grave consequences of the Iraqi aggression.

From the very beginning of the conflict, Ukraine actively supported the efforts of the international community to bring about a peaceful settlement. The Parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine made a number of statements on the issue. On each occasion, we gave full support to the actions of the United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council, condemned Iraq's aggression and emphasized the need for an unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwaiti territory.

Against the background of the successful process of the post-crisis settlement in the Persian Gulf region, it is completely understandable that the international community feels concern at the lack of progress in efforts to arrive at an overall settlement of the fundamental cause of the Middle East problem, namely, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its key issue, the aspirations of the Palestinian people for the implementation of its legitimate political rights, including the right to self-determination.

It is for that very reason that we attach great hopes to the convening of the international conference in Madrid on 30 October 1991 and the initial round of bilateral discussions which ensued. The successful start of the Madrid conference was made possible by the radical changes for the better that

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have taken place in the world and by the growing trend towards resolving the burning problems of the present day by peaceful political means.

Ukraine greatly appreciates the role played by the States that initiated the conference, the United States and the Soviet Union, and wishes to pay tribute to the readiness of the parties to the conflict to avail themselves of that historic opportunity. The major shifts in efforts to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict enable us to take another look at the future role of the United Nations in that region. It is generally acknowledged that the United Nations has made an important contribution to mobilizing the efforts of the international community to resolve that long-standing and explosive conflict. It is in the United Nations itself that the concept of an international peace conference on the Middle East was first formulated, and the initial elements of a peaceful settlement were laid down in resolutions adopted by the Security Council. A role in those collective efforts was also played by Ukraine, which has for many years taken an active part in the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

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The convening of the international peace conference in Madrid demonstrated the willingness of all those directly involved in the conflict to assume responsibility for the future of the Middle East. We wish them every success. As was indicated in the message of Mr. Leonid Kravchuk, President of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, to the participants in the conference:

"... we believe that statesmanship and good will will make it possible to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the principles of justice and respect by everyone for the legitimate rights and interests of all countries and peoples in the world".

Now that the Middle East negotiating process has become a reality, it seems to us that the task of the United Nations is, having given active moral support to the process and created a favourable atmosphere for the negotiations, to try at the same time to outline possible approaches to the solution of other problems in the region.

In that context, Ukraine welcomes the preliminary contacts in Paris and London between the representatives of the five States that are permanent members of the Security Council, with a view to drawing up basic principles to regulate the supplying of arms. We support the proposals aimed at converting the Middle East region into an area free of nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction. The momentum given to that process by the implementation of the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) should be backed up with similar measures agreed upon by the States of the region themselves.

The United Nations can make a noteworthy contribution to the resolution of the economic and social problems confronting the peoples and States of the Middle East in the new post-confrontation era. Among them are the problems

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involved in restoring and reconstructing Lebanon and in promoting the reintegration of Israel into the economic life of the region. The prospects for a political settlement of the Middle East conflict provide an opportunity to attract resources and capital to the process of the economic reconstruction of the former battle areas on a much broader basis than was possible during the confrontation. Experience in tackling the ecological catastrophe visited upon Kuwait has demonstrated that in that sphere there is a place for the knowledge and skills of people from all countries, including those of Eastern Europe. We are very pleased to note that specialists from Ukraine played an active role in putting out the oil-well fires in Kuwait.

We must overcome the influence of the stereotypes that have arisen in the perception of the situation in the Middle East. In his statement to the General Assembly, Mr. Leonid Kravchuk, President of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, said:

> "It has made fundamental adjustments in its attitude to the tragic pages of its history and in its approach to a number of world issues. Thus, for example, it would have been impossible for the independent Ukraine to support, let alone co-sponsor, the resolution equating Zionism with racism - a resolution born out of a bitter ideological confrontation between the nations of the world." (A/46/PV.14, pp. 29-30)

But let us be frank: history, including our own history, indicates that any ideology, any political doctrine, can be distorted and even turned on its head. Therefore we should be guided today not by doctrines or ideology, either good or bad, but by the universal values formulated and enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Prominent among them is the right of peoples to self-determination. Independent and democratic Ukraine reaffirms

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its support for the right of the Arab people of Palestine to determine its future independently, free from occupation or diktat. We reaffirm our commitment to the principle that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible. We repeat that the right of all States and peoples of the region to exist within secure and recognized boundaries cannot be called into doubt.

A sovereign and independent Ukraine of 52 million people is interested in developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with the States of the Middle East. This is true both of Israel and of its Arab neighbours. Ukraine favours a durable peace in the Middle East on the basis of strict observance of the norms and principles of international law and believes that the attainment of that goal will provide Ukraine and other States with an opportunity to develop mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries in the region. Relations between Ukraine and the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East have a long history, and we hope that their future will be no less bright.

In conclusion, I should like to express our solidarity with the Secretary-General in the view stated in his report (A/46/652) on the item under discussion. In that report the Secretary-General expresses his sincere hope that

> "the momentum that has been generated by the Madrid talks will be sustained and that the lasting peace that has so long been denied to all the peoples of the Middle East will indeed become a reality."

Mr. MAKKAWI (Lebanon): As this is my first time I have addressed the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session, I should like to congratulate Mr. Shihabi on his election to the very important post of the presidency of the Assembly. His achievement honours the entire Arab world, and that is a benchmark in terms of world recognition of Arab moderation and commitment to peace. The fact that Mr. Shihabi was born in Jerusalem - the crux and kernel of the Arab-Israeli conflict - is heartening to all of us who seek a just, comprehensive and durable peace for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, particularly at this historic juncture, this period between the peace conference in Madrid and the second round of bilateral negotiations, which is scheduled to be held in Washington in December.

I wish also to thank the Secretary-General for the substance and objectivity of his report (A/46/652) on this agenda item and for the views that he expresses there. In Mr. Perez de Cuellar Lebanon has found a great friend and supporter, and his deep commitment to the achievement of peace in the Middle East will not be forgotten.

The Arab-Israeli conflict - one of the oldest problems on the agenda of the United Nations - arises from the failure to resolve the problem of Palestine that resulted from the creation of the Jewish State on land inhabited for thousands of years by the indigenous Palestinian people. That is the core of the region's problems, and Lebanon is committed to realization of the political aspirations of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination. Nothing less will provide a solution to the cycle of war and violence in the Middle East.

(Mr. Makkawi, Lebanon)

Today, Israel is surrounded by a crescent of pain - the result of the forcible occupation of Palestinian, Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese land and of the human-rights violations bred by that extortion. The occupation and annexation of Arab territories are illegal. They contravene the United Nations Charter and numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. I refer in particular to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which are based on the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and which provide for the exchange of land for peace. I refer also to Security Council resolution 694 (1991), which declares that the Fourth Geneva Convention is applicable to all territories, including Jerusalem, occupied by Israel since 1967.

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In a discussion of the situation in the Middle East, it is important to note that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), while based on the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, bear no direct reference to Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon. Their implementation is necessary for the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region but separate from Lebanon's conflict with Israel. My country was not a party to the 1967 and 1973 wars and does not have a territorial dispute with Israel. Nor is it subject to the "land for peace" parameters set by these resolutions. Its boundaries are well-defined and internationally recognized. The rights of Lebanon and the duties of the international community vis-à-vis Lebanon are embodied in Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for

> "strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries". (Security Council resolution 425 (1978), para. 1)

This resolution led to the creation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area; it clearly calls upon Israel

> "immediately to cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory". (ibid.)

The implementation of this resolution would be a simple procedure, but for 13 years Israel has adamantly refused to comply and insists on digging itself deeper into Lebanon. Israel maintains that the occupation serves the purpose of creating for itself a security zone in southern Lebanon, a concept which is unprecedented in its arrogance and wholly outside the realm of

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international law. Its true agenda is to perpetuate the occupation and bring instability to Lebanon, with the help of its puppet militia.

Meanwhile, Lebanon will continue to use all of its resources to liberate its national soil. In the past the Israeli Government alleged that it would withdraw from the south just as soon as Lebanon re-established a strong central government. However, with the success of the Taif Agreement and the Lebanese peace process, this canard can no longer be supported. Lebanon has rallied the support of its citizens and dissolved all militias and collected their weapons, while the Lebanese Army and the internal security forces have been deployed throughout the country with the exception of the area occupied by Israel.

Now the Lebanese Army stands ready to extend its authority over the south, once UNIFIL is allowed by Israel to fulfil its mandate in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). I remind my colleagues that in name and in nature UNIFIL is an interim force, and in his report on the situation in the Middle East the Secretary-General referred to the progress of the Taif Agreement and

> "expressed himself in favour of the progressive transfer to the Lebanese Army of responsibility for security in the areas at present controlled by UNIFIL." (A/46/652, para. 7)

In the light of the new world order and the invigoration of the United Nations, as evidenced by the resolution of the Gulf crisis, it is unacceptable for Israel to be allowed to prevent Lebanon from implementing resolution 425 (1978), particularly in the light of the tragic human ramifications of the occupation. The civilian population in the occupied zone and even the Lebanese heartland are forced to endure bombings and human rights violations, which have accelerated since the commencement of the peace conference.

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Without provocation, Israeli troops are opening fire on entire villages for days at a time, blowing up houses, seizing lands and fencing them off for military purposes. They are imposing curfews, blocking shipments of food and medical supplies and inducing psychological terror through the use of leaflets and loudspeakers that warn of impending devastation. This month the Israeli Government dropped more than 160 artillery shells on the town of Nabatiyya and issued a 12-hour ultimatum which forced thousands of Lebanese to flee their homes. Just yesterday the Israeli forces killed three Lebanese soldiers who were carrying out their duties in an area 40 miles north of Lebanon's internationally recognized border with Israel. And this morning the representative of Israel had the audacity to shed tears over the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon - when it is clear that the sole source of destabilization in Lebanon is Israel. And the list goes on and on.

On behalf of my Government, I wish to take this opportunity once more to thank UNIFIL for fulfilling its noble mission. The peace-keeping troops continue to operate in spite of dangers such as kidnapping and direct and indirect Israeli artillery fire, and we, the people of Lebanon, are grateful for this.

As time precludes a recital of all the human violations committed by Israel even in my own country, I shall spare this body the all-too-familiar details of what is being perpetrated elsewhere in the region. Instead, I should like to focus on the explosion of settlements and expropriation of Arab land, which are gravely detrimental to the peace process.

Since 1948 we have witnessed the number of Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip growing from 7 to 165, and recently the Israeli Minister of Housing and Construction boasted to the international press that the rate at which Israel is building apartments in

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the territories has burgeoned from 3,000 to nearly 80,000 per year. Such an admission both confirms the solipsistic nature of the Shamir Government and underlines the fact that Israel not only is building new settlements but also is expanding existing ones.

Now under construction is an eight-mile-wide, 18.6-mile-long wedge of Jewish development straight through the heart of the West Bank. Nine thousand homes are scheduled to be built along what Israel calls the "Trans-Samaria Highway", a brand new highway stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

The desperation of the entire Palestinian population, including 3 million refugees, has been further fuelled by the anticipated arrival of 1 million Soviet Jews over the next two or three years. Since the cost of an apartment in the West Bank is half that of one in Tel Aviv, it is certain that a great number of these immigrants will further impinge on the limited land and water resources of the occupied territories and neighbouring countries, including my own. It is also certain that this influx will push more Palestinians off their land and create a new generation with no alternative to fundamentalism and war.

As part of the Arab world and a party to the peace conference, Lebanon seeks a durable peace in the Middle East based on all United Nations and Security Council resolutions relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including Security Council resolu[illegible]42 (1967) and 338 (1973). These, like all resolutions, are inviolable in nature and root the positions of Jordan, Syria and the Palestinians firmly in international law.

(Mr. Makkawi, Lebanon)

Further, as articulated in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East, they form the basis of the Conference, which in the words of the United States and the Soviet Union, is aimed at achieving

> "'a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement through direct negotiations on two tracks, between Israel and Arab States, and between Israel and the Palestinians.'" (A/46/652, para. 31)

(Mr. Makkawi, Lebanon)

Lebanon commends the co-sponsors of the conference and urges them to continue their drive until negotiations are brought to a concrete and satisfactory conclusion as defined by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and all other relevant resolutions such as 497 (1981), which declares the annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights null and void, and Security Council resolution 465 (1980), which calls for the dismantling of settlements built by Israel in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

Irrespective of the results or duration of the peace talks, Lebanon looks forward to the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) in the very near future. The situation in the south of my country is deplorable and cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. We urge the international community and the Security Council in particular to implement this resolution at long last.

Lebanon awaits, with hope in its heart, the resumption of the peace process in Washington and earnestly hopes that the forces of moderation in Israel will triumph over the hardliners in the Likud government. On the Arab side there is all the willingness and desire to arrive at a settlement, although the Israelis have made a number of antagonistic and provocative moves. Throughout the duration of the conference in Madrid my country was bombed by Israel, and within hours of the commencement of bilateral negotiations with the Syrian delegation a new settlement was inaugurated in the Golan. The Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. James Baker, described such actions as being unlikely "to build the kind of climate that would serve the cause of peace".

The world is on the verge of a new order characterized by peace, sovereignty and the independence of nations, and the people of the Middle East

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deserve the same cooperation and collective action that Kuwait, Namibia and Cambodia have seen.

As the United Nations has great powers, so too does it have great responsibilities, and both its actions and inactions impinge upon the peoples of this globe.

Let us hope that the year 1992 will bring to Arabs and Israelis the peace that they have been seeking for many decades: at long last, a peace which is based on justice, equity and the principles of international law.

Mr. AFONSO (Mozambique): Recent events resulting from the Gulf crisis have underscored the need for a comprehensive, just and lasting political settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

I wish first of all to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his report on the situation in the Middle East (A/46/652), and to note other relevant documents on the agenda item under consideration. My delegation also wishes to place on record its appreciation of the outstanding manner in which the Secretary-General has fulfilled his responsibilities in the search for peace, not only for the Middle East region but for all the regions of the world.

We are pleased to note that, as a general trend, efforts to restore and promote peace, confidence and understanding among nations have, in particular since the last session of the General Assembly, been redoubled. In this regard, we have followed with renewed interest the developments that have taken place in the Middle East region.

In assessing these developments, we also note that the initiatives undertaken so far have not yet produced the desired results of lessening the tensions and violence. The situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

territories continues to be a matter of grave concern for the international community and calls for immediate and decisive actions.

Above all, the Palestinian people continue to be deprived of their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination. We wish to state that without an adequate solution of the Palestinian issue, rightly regarded as the core of the Middle East conflict, there will be very few prospects for a lasting peace in the Middle East.

The violation of basic human rights in the occupied territories continues unabated, and the resort to violence by the Israeli authorities in these territories has resulted in the continuing uprisings. As a consequence, many innocent civilians have lost their lives and extensive damage has been caused to property.

As can be seen from the Secretary-General's report, the Security Council has convened a number of meetings specifically to address the situation in these territories. During those meetings, several resolutions were adopted. Despite their mandatory nature, some of the most important Security Council resolutions on this subject have not yet been implemented.

My delegation welcomes the joint efforts by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which culminated in the convening of the Madrid conference from 30 October to 1 November 1991. The Madrid conference made it possible, for the first time, for Arabs, Palestinians and Israelis to sit together at a negotiating table. This is in fact a major accomplishment among all the efforts that have been undertaken in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

We should like to agree with the Secretary-General's observations in his report when he states, with regard to the Conference, that

"it is important to note, in this connection, that although it is being conducted outside the framework of the United Nations, this process has the support of the parties concerned and has as its basis Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which have long been recognized as the cornerstone of a comprehensive settlement."

(A/46/652, para. 31)

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

It is true, as has been emphasized by several delegations, that, given the profound mistrust resulting from the long-standing Israeli-Arab conflict, one cannot, realistically speaking, expect an immediate settlement of all the issues at stake in just one single meeting.

The most important thing, however, is that momentum has at last been generated and a precedent set for future negotiations. If all the parties concerned display their readiness and resoluteness to negotiate in good faith, then sooner rather than later the international community might be able to rejoice and celebrate the settlement of the Middle East conflict. We therefore encourage and appeal to all the participants in the Madrid conference to set aside their differences and give peace a chance.

My delegation looks forward to a prompt resumption of the negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians and the Arabs in Washington. Although we may understand the difficulties that have existed in determining a venue agreeable to all the parties concerned, we nevertheless wish to recall that recent historical examples have demonstrated that differences of approach on other issues, including the question of venue, should not undermine the spirit and willingness to negotiate. This is particularly relevant in the case of the participants in the Madrid conference.

The international community would welcome any positive outcome of the ongoing talks, regardless of their venue.

Although we recognize the importance of the subject-matter, we feel that, at this stage, due consideration should be accorded the discussion of hard-core issues. To this end, perhaps the most important of all might be the creation of an appropriate political environment conducive to peaceful negotiations. The spirit of compromise must prevail over all other considerations.

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

We believe that whatever the venue, room can be found to accommodate and respect the interests of all, especially when those interests involve neighbouring States. As a first step, peaceful coexistence among nations should be the criterion of all actions in cases where it has not been possible for countries to establish normal relations among themselves.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to stress the importance of confidence-building measures among all the participants in the talks. We are profoundly disappointed over recent reports indicating Israel's continued pattern of establishing new Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. Some of the settlements are said to have been established shortly before the talks. We deplore these actions, inasmuch as they run counter to the spirit of the ongoing peace initiatives on the Middle East.

In the interest of all States and peoples of the region and in the interest of international peace and security in general, we call upon Israel to display the required responsibility and statesmanship and desist forthwith from creating new settlements. In addition, concerted efforts should be made by all the parties concerned to avoid taking any further actions that might undermine the talks.

We have just had the opportunity to listen to the statement of our brother and colleague, the representative of Lebanon. My delegation found his statement very touching and I should like to express, from this rostrum, our solidarity with the Lebanese Government and people.

In conclusion, I should like to state that my Government continues firmly to believe that the restoration of peace and tranquillity in the Middle East requires full respect for the interests of all States and peoples of the region, including those of the State of Israel and those of the Palestinian State.

(Mr. Afonso, Mozambique)

In our view, the existence of all States of the region must be considered irreversible and undeniable realities. One cannot exist by destroying or refusing to accept the existence of the other. Failure to understand this basic reality will only result in violence, war and instability, with all their grave consequences for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is high time for all peace-loving nations to redouble their efforts towards this goal.

We should not forget that the persistence of conflict in the Middle East has resulted in five devastating wars since the creation of our Organization.

Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria): When the debate on this agenda item was discussed at the last session of the General Assembly, it was amidst tensions brought about by the Gulf crisis and the disillusionment of failed opportunities. My delegation is, however, happy to note that new positive trends have emerged in the international environment that make a settlement of the conflict in the Middle East possible.

In the aftermath of the cold war, ideological confrontation has been replaced by rapprochement among the major world Powers, thereby enhancing international cooperation as a positive and effective instrument for addressing old and new problems facing the international community. We must endeavour, therefore, to seize the new opportunities provided by the end of the cold war and the resolution of the Gulf crisis in order to find a just and lasting solution to the Middle East crisis as a whole. We have witnessed, in this period, a new round of Arab-Israeli diplomacy, under the auspices of the United States and the Soviet Union, and we warmly welcome the recent Middle East peace conference held in Madrid. It is our sincere hope that the Conference will mark the beginning of a new era of consultation, reconciliation and cooperation leading to an enduring peace in the region.

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

For the 43 years the Arab-Israeli conflict has persisted, various peace plans and inter-Arab initiatives have failed to bridge the enormous differences separating the two parties that had long refused to recognize each other or even address each other. We are therefore encouraged by the present peace efforts and we urge the international community to lend its full support to the opportunities now present for moving the Arab-Israeli conflict to the stage of resolution and thus rekindle the long-cherished hopes for peace and stability in the Middle East.

It is clear to us that the key to peace in the Middle East is the resolution of the Palestinian question. The denial of the Palestinians of their right to self-determination and homeland cannot be allowed to continue without further endangering international peace and security. Moreover, the issue of self-determination is not separate from respect for human rights which has today assumed a far greater dimension in the international agenda. While we recognize the right of every State in the region, including Israel, to live within secure and recognized borders, we do not accept that the Palestinian people are less deserving of the protection and the high moral values of this Organization. Moreover, we remain concerned with the cynical application by Israel and some other countries of a different scale of values when it comes to the plight of the Palestinians. It is necessary to stress that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) provide a fair and just basis for the resolution of the Middle East conflict. We therefore call on Israel to give up the occupied territories in exchange for peace and prosperity in the region. After all, the parties to the conflict have a shared interest in ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

During the debate on the agenda item, "Question of Palestine", many delegations catalogued the harsh measures and collective punishments - such as deportations, arrests on a large scale, detentions, raids of homes and villages of innocent people, prolonged curfews and destruction of trees and crops - Israel continues to perpetuate against the Palestinians. These actions are in clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilian persons and of international humanitarian law. We are particularly concerned that women and children constitute a sizeable segment of the victims of these harsh measures. The international community has a duty to protect the civilian population in the occupied territories. The failure to solve this problem will not only continue to inflict tremendous suffering on the Palestinian people but also continue to pose a serious threat to peace and stability in the Middle East and indeed the world as a whole. Nigeria firmly believes that the role of the United Nations in the peace process in the Middle East remains crucial. This is why we have been persistent, along with other countries, in the call for an international peace conference in the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with all parties concerned participating on an equal footing.

My delegation believes that the desire to pursue a settlement in the Middle East has never been stronger than it is now. As we move towards the end of the century, the international community, and in particular the parties to the conflict in the Middle East, must demonstrate the political will and resolve to seek a peaceful solution. We urge all the parties concerned to eliminate rigidities in the ongoing search for a lasting solution of the problem. When my President addressed the General Assembly on 4 October this year, speaking not only on behalf of Nigeria but also on behalf of the

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

Organization of African Unity, he called on all of us to walk together to resolve to make the last decade of this century a decade of peace and harmony everywhere and in particular in the Middle East. The international community must seize the opportunity of the dramatic changes in the international political environment to assist the Arabs and Israel to find lasting solutions to the tragic conflicts that have dominated the Middle East landscape.

Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): As the representative of a peace-loving country that is a stalwart defender of the principles of international law, particularly the peaceful settlement of disputes, my delegation cannot refrain from participating in this debate.

This is a timely opportunity to reiterate our earnest wish to see peace, stability and progress come to the Middle East and its peoples. We would also like to express the fervent hope of the Government of Chile that the current negotiations on the future of the region will lead once and for all to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution, one that brings security to all - people and countries - guarantees the dignity of all and that enables all the parties involved to contribute to reaching the understandings the region needs and the international community requires.

Once again I would like to recall that my Government's position on the problem of the Middle East is one of firm support for the principles of international law and of promotion of full compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), containing the conceptual basis for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to this dispute. We recognize the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and its legitimate right to establish a sovereign and independent State.

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

The President of Chile, when he specifically referred to this question in his statement at the previous session of the General Assembly stated:

"My Government reaffirms its conviction that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) constitute an adequate basis for guaranteeing both Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries and the Palestinian people's right to a sovereign State." (A/45/PV.12, pp. 24-25)

We are fully aware of the difficulties impeding the achievement of that aim. At all events, we think that the first step has been taken in a negotiating process that we know will be arduous and protracted. We believe that today, more than ever, a final solution to this matter that has been and continues to be of such great concern to us must necessarily be predicated upon the recognition of the rights of both the State of Israel and the Palestinian people.

When I spoke under this item from this rostrum last year, we were facing a more critical regional situation - we were on the edge of armed conflict in the Persian Gulf as a result of the illegitimate occupation of Kuwait by Iraq. This defiant act of territorial usurpation, strongly repudiated by the international community, unfortunately led to a conflagration high in human and material cost.

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

Once the Gulf crisis came to an end and the sovereignty of Kuwait was restored, the situation in the area gradually began to stabilize, a process we hope will continue. To that end, Iraq must comply fully with the Security Council resolutions so that the sanctions can be lifted as soon as possible.

The uncertain prospects I mentioned a year ago are more promising today, especially since the international peace conference on the Middle East was recently convened in Madrid. We are pleased that the patient efforts of Secretary of State Baker to promote that initiative have been successful. We are also pleased to note the flexibility evinced by all parties involved, which has made it possible to begin this process.

The peace conference meant that, under the sponsorship of the United States and the Soviet Union, the parties directly involved in solving the Middle East conflict could meet for the first time to discuss a common objective of singular importance, with the appropriate presence of the United Nations.

In this context it is only right once again to express my delegation's acknowledgement of the work of the Organization and its Secretary-General and their persistent, tireless efforts to achieve this deeply desired peace in the region. In particular, we welcome the most recent contribution made to ensure the release of hostages.

My Government also welcomes the convening of the Madrid conference and appreciates the positive attitude initially demonstrated by all participants. At the same time, we hope that there will be a constructive follow-up to such a positive meeting in the difficult stage that is about to begin.

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

My delegation is pleased to state that the Government of Chile made an official declaration indicating its support for the peace process that began in Madrid. In our view, and I quote from that statement,

"It is only by means of peaceful negotiations that a just and stable solution can be found to the problems affecting the region".

We also indicated our Government's desire - and once again I quote - that "these talks be completely successful, thereby making it possible to begin a new stage of détente, reconciliation, mutual respect and cooperation in the Middle East, all of which should have a positive impact on the rest of the international community."

We are convinced that the solution of such a complex problem is not easy, for this situation has lasted for more than four decades and has entailed many wars and armed interventions.

Hence it is important that we encourage the will to explore ways to reach agreements so that concrete and lasting arrangements can be reached acceptable to all parties.

We hope that in this new stage the peace talks will be strengthened in an atmosphere of greater flexibility and confidence. We understand that this is a feeling shared by the majority of Member States, as we have noted from the numerous statements made by friendly delegations in the plenary meetings of the Assembly.

We reiterate our trust in the United Nations and its ability to find ways and means to achieve a just peace in the Middle East. We consider that the convening of a peace conference, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/68, is particularly relevant when the time is ripe, along with

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

initiatives that have already been adopted or others that can also be taken with the agreement of the parties concerned.

In a new international arena where confrontation is beginning to be replaced by cooperation and understanding; where fear and mistrust among nations in the region are yielding to opportunities for agreement; and, in general, where we witness a more favourable spirit of cooperation or, as was stated by our Secretary-General in his report, "a unique juxtaposition of promise and perils." (A/46/1, sect. III).

We trust that the United Nations, with the resolute support of the international community, will once again successfully meet the challenges before it and fulfil the hopes placed in it, thereby dispelling the shadow of any greater dangers in the Middle East.

We also support the peace-keeping operations launched by our Organization in the region. In this context we would like to emphasize the important contributions made in key sectors, such as the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon. The work carried out by military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine (UNTSO), based in Jerusalem, is of particular significance.

With great pride I recall that Chile is participating in some of these peace-keeping operations and will continue to do so with the self-same devotion and enthusiasm. Moreover, Chile is contributing to UNTSO a helicopter unit from the National Air Force.

In the course of debate on the question of Palestine, which is the key to an overall solution of the situation in the Middle East, we have listened carefully to the numerous statements made by delegations. In all of them we

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

have noted a common denominator, namely, that a speedy diplomatic settlement of the problems before us cannot be postponed. The political will of the interested parties is essential.

The opportunities for peace in the Middle East have not yet been exhausted. On the contrary, we believe that Madrid has raised new and encouraging prospects for peace for all in the region. My country will continue to support all initiatives that will achieve this estimable objective. We are convinced that this historic region will sooner or later build its well-deserved haven of peace and security like other regions facing similar difficulties.

In conclusion, I should like to quote the words of the Chilean Minister for Foreign Affairs spoken recently in the Assembly, which summarize our final thoughts:

> "The last decade of this surprising century has opened up unexpected possibilities for the international community - and also great uncertainties. It is for the nations assembled here, and for the Organization that brings them together, to know how to take advantage of the former and dispel the latter." (A/46/PV.22, p. 70)

Mr. AL-SAMEEN (Oman) (interpretation from Arabic): Allow me at the outset to convey to you in the name of my delegation our great appreciation of the work that has been done in the course of the debates and discussions of the General Assembly during the past period of your mandate. These accomplishments show above all your wide experience and skill. Undoubtedly you will draw on both to enrich the work of this session.

The General Assembly is considering an extremely important item on which the full attention of the world community is focused: the situation in the Middle East. As you know, this region is one of the most serious hotbeds of tension that threaten international peace and security. The problem of Palestine is the pivotal issue of this conflict which has continued to generate instability in the area and in the world at large. If no just solution is found to this problem and related problems, the potential for other conflicts in the Middle East will increase. It is thus imperative for the international community to exert further efforts, in particular at this crucial time, with a view to reaching a comprehensive and just settlement of the problem in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legality, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Proceeding from the faith of the Sultanate of Oman in the logic of dialogue and its importance in settling international conflicts, we welcomed the peace conference held in Madrid on 30 October 1991. We also welcomed the American-Soviet efforts that have led to the convening of that conference. In addition, we have also welcomed the positive and courageous positions adopted by the concerned Arab parties with respect to the conference. We wish to

(Mr. Al-Samsam, Oman)

mention in particular here the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which demonstrated political realism in deciding during the 19th meeting of the Palestine National Council, held in Algiers in November 1988, to accept resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We also commend the Council's decision, during its special session held on 24 September 1991, to agree to the participation of the Palestinians of the occupied territories in the Madrid peace conference. Without a doubt, these steps taken by the PLO are the strongest proof of the credibility of its desire for peace, especially if we take into account the obstacles it faced in moving from one stage to the next.

Given this Arab approach, we do hope that Israel will, in return, take positive steps towards peace by halting the building of settlements in the occupied territories, which is considered a flagrant breach of international norms and laws, and also by stopping the immigration of Jews from all parts of the globe to settle in the occupied Arab territories. Israel must also put an end to its arbitrary practices against the defenceless Palestinian people and its peaceful and valiant intifadah. Israel must give the present peace efforts an opportunity to succeed.

On the basis of the aforementioned points, my delegation maintains that the opportunity for peace at this stage is much more favorable than at any time before. We therefore call upon the international community not to miss this precious opportunity and to spare no efforts in forcing Israel to show flexibility and acquiescence, so that the just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question may be achieved in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legality.

(Mr. Al-Sameen, Oman)

While the world closely watches the present peace efforts, we find that Israel is going ahead with the building of settlements in the occupied Arab territories, especially in the Syrian Arab Golan Heights, with the aim of changing the demographic nature of that territory.

With regard to Lebanon, my delegation has followed with satisfaction the steps adopted by the Lebanese Government in implementing the Taif agreement. We hope that the Lebanese people will enjoy more security and more prosperity. In the meantime, we wish to reiterate the call upon the international community to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory. While we call upon the international community to force Israel to implement the Security Council resolutions and to enable the legitimate Lebanese Government to extend its full control over all the Lebanese soil, we must call upon the international community to help in reconstructing Lebanon and returning life to its normal course.

I cannot fail here to applaud the release of the hostages that had been detained there for a long time. We do hope that we will soon hear of the release of all the remaining detainees.

In conclusion, we hope that the international will reflected in the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, side by side with the efforts exerted in the search for a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East question will find their way to success so that our peoples may not be disappointed and the United Nations may not lose its credibility.

Mr. EL-FATTAL (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): Here we are once again considering the item on the situation in the Middle East. This time round, however, we do so against the backdrop of a different international climate that is cause for optimism and that makes us look forward to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict within the framework of international legality and on the basis of United Nations resolutions which provide internationally agreed terms of reference that should immunize the peace process against failure and consolidate the search for an optimum utilization of the major international developments which have heralded a new era in contemporary political history.

The preliminary sum total of the radical changes that are taking place in international relations is that a just political balance is the mainstay of peace, that the determination to exercise the right of the self-determination is an unstoppable motive power and that foreign occupation is invariably doomed to failure and destined to come to an end.

In sum, the principles of international law and norms of international legality can neither be ignored nor made the pawns of double standards, since respect for those norms and principles is the only guarantee for world peace.

The convening of the Madrid peace conference was the culmination of the unremitting efforts made by President Bush with the support of President Gorbachev, with a view to making the conference a forum wherein international legality would have the upper hand and not a mere ceremonial meeting as one participating party would have wished. There has been no ambiguity whatever in the objectives and structure of the conference. That is the reason why it has become the focus of attention the world over, especially

(Mr. El-Fattal, Syrian Arab Republic)

as it has highlighted once again the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by force and the right of peoples to self-determination.

The Israeli side spoke in the Madrid peace conference of everything except the territories which have been occupied by Israel for 24 years. The Israelis have stuck to the intransigent posture of their Government, namely that there is no relation between land and peace. The peace which Israel wants is that which allows it to swallow up the land of others. Israel has not made any effort to provide the requirements of real peace in the region. It wants to hold on to the land and to go on denying the legitimate national and human rights of the Palestinian people.

Not content with the intransigence it has shown in the Madrid peace conference, Israel has chosen, from the very beginning of the conference, to take measures and steps aimed at sabotaging the international peace efforts. Israeli intransigence during the conference was glaringly highlighted by the daily shelling and bombing of southern Lebanon, the establishment of two new settlements in the Golan Heights and the adoption of a resolution by the Knesset which declares the Syrian Golan Heights as Israeli territory that cannot be ceded.

Israel thus gave concrete proof to the whole world that it is the enemy of peace and that it does not heed international public opinion or international legality. The Israeli Knesset's resolution is a naked breach of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). By adopting such a resolution, Israel showed naked defiance of the principles and objectives of the Madrid peace conference regardless of the fact that the conference was convened under the co-sponsorship of the Soviet Union and the United States

(Mr. El-Fattal, Syrian Arab Republic)

and with the participation of the European Community and the United Nations. No one can deny that the the Knesset resolution is a flagrant breach of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) which considered Israel's decision to annex the Golan Heights in 1981 as null and void and without any legal consequence. In addition, the Knesset resolution violates the principles of international law and the purposes and principles of the Madrid conference, particularly the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.

In today's world, the international community cannot permit the ascendancy of the law of the jungle over the interests and the very destiny of the peoples of our region. It is the principles of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations that should have the upper hand after so many years of contempt for international legality. It is a fact of history that from day one of its existence, Israel has resisted the rule of law. Today, it is actively resisting the peace efforts being made to implement the relevant United Nations resolution.

It is Israel and Israel alone that seeks to undermine the peace efforts. In so doing, it uses all its clout and justifies its political aberration with outdated theories that it uses to legitimize occupation, annexation, displacement of Arabs and expansion. In this, it resorts, at times, to fabricated history and at other times to otherworldly references to "God's will" as if God has commanded Israel to kill and displace the peoples of the region. Such thinking runs counter to the most rudimentary principles of logic, legality and flies in the face of every human principle.

Israel's claims which are founded on outdated ideological dogma, forged interpretations of ancient history and distortion of historical facts aim at

(Mr. El-Fattal, Syrian Arab Republic)

the replacement of indigenous populations by alien Jewish immigrants and, therefore, cannot be legitimized under any legal human or moral code. It is indeed a paradox that Israel should refuse to implement General Assembly resolution 194 (1948) on the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes and the compensation of those who do not wish to return, under the pretext that the land is too small to allow the return of those people who had been uprooted and expelled from that very land, while, at the same time, it continues to lure hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants to come and settle in that piece of land which, in Israel's view, was too small to accommodate its original owners.

If the desired objective of the peace conference is coexistence by peoples and States of the region in peace, security and prosperity and the channelling of the region's potential and resources to the service of the region's economy and development, would it be conceivable to hope for the achievement of such a lofty goal without the elimination of occupation and without the return of the usurped rights to their rightful owners?

The Arabs have offered a lot for peace and have expressed their clear desire for peace, calling only for the implementation of the Charter of the United Nations and the faithful implementation of the Organization's resolutions while Israel alone continues to ignore reality and holds on to the occupied territories to which its refers, with its usual arrogance, as the "liberated territories". All this is done under the pretext of security, as if territorial expansion and the denial of the rights of peoples would guarantee security in an age of technological and scientific progress and sophisticated weaponry which Israel possesses in abundance. In actual fact,

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however, expansion and the denial of other people's rights only increase the determination of peoples to continue to struggle for their usurped rights.

Peace and the usurpation of the territories of others are incompatible. In order for peace to be durable and stable it has to be comprehensive and it has to embrace all the parties involved in the conflict on every front. All the developments that have taken place in our region prove the validity of this argument. We have declared in Madrid that we are determined to continue to work for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace. We will continue to draw upon our inexhaustible reserve of positive feelings and serious desire for peace to ensure the success of the peace process.

(Mr. El-Fattal, Syrian Arab Republic)

We are equally determined, however, to reject any exploitation of the current peace process in legitimizing what, in our view and the view of the United Nations with its Charter, resolutions and credibility, is illegal and unacceptable. We are also determined to reject the scoring of any gain, no matter how small it may be, that may reward aggression.

We have said in Madrid and we wish to reiterate here that the Syrian position, which is based on the principles of international legality and United Nations resolutions is that Israel must withdraw from every inch of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon. That withdrawal is inescapable under the law. So far as Syria is concerned, it is inescapable also to guarantee that the Palestinian people should exercise its national and legitimate political rights, foremost among which is its right to self-determination.

Since the beginning of this General Assembly session we have declared that under the leadership of President Hafez Al-Assad, we in Syria, are determined to wage the battle for peace to the very end. There is no retreat from our position. There is no bargaining away of any of our territories or our rights. Our demands are legitimate, and they are supported by international law under United Nations resolutions. Our cause is just, and it is supported by our people and by the international community as a whole.

Finally, I should like to say that we have never been warmongers. We do not like destruction. Syria has repeatedly called for a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of United Nations resolutions and has always reaffirmed its genuine desire to achieve peace. At the height of the October war, President Assad said:

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"We are not advocates of killing and destruction. We are only defending ourselves against killing and destruction. We are not aggressors. We have never been aggressors. But we have defended and we continue to defend ourselves against aggression. We do not want death for anyone. We want to defend our people against death. We love freedom, and we want it for ourselves and for others."

This morning, we heard a statement by the representative of Israel. We are really amazed at his Machiavellian justification of Israel's occupation of the Arab territories by accusing others of being occupiers of Lebanon.

Everyone in this hall knows, and we have often said here, that Syria's presence in Lebanon is at the request of the legitimate Lebanese authorities as a consequence of Israel's offensive war against Lebanon - a war that almost totally destroyed about half of that country. So the Israeli delegate's allegations are but a ploy to divert attention from Israel's occupation of parts of southern Lebanon, as if Syria's fraternal presence in Lebanon, were not in response to the repeated appeals of the Lebanese people and Government with a view to putting an end to the civil war in which Israel played a major role.

Anyone who reads the memoirs of Moshe Sharett, Israel's Foreign Minister in 1950, will become aware of the fact that Israel's schemes for the fragmentation of Lebanon into small religious statelets that would be in a state of perpetual strife are not new. However, Sharett's dream has not come true. Only one small detail came true: one Lebanese officer did serve the interests of Israel in southern Lebanon. However, even this has been frustrated by the people of Lebanon who have made it impossible to realize Israel's objectives which, originally, were scheduled for 1950 and not 1982.

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This frustration of Sharett's dream has been possible thanks to the Lebanese people's awareness of Israel's expansionist designs on southern Lebanon and on other areas of Lebanon as well with the purpose of expropriating the waters of Lebanon and carving up the country into small statelets as planned in the 1950s.

I did not intend to speak of Israel's occupation of parts of southern Lebanon as the central point of my statement was to be the Madrid peace conference. However, the Israeli representative has reminded me of the need to delve into the aspects of Israel's destructive role in southern Lebanon and the insane war waged by Israel against that Arab country that may be small in size but whose cultural, economic and political contributions to the Arab world are considerable indeed.

What really irks the Israeli representative and the forces of Israeli occupation is that the legitimate Government of Lebanon - whether in the person of Mr. Elias Hrawi the President, the Prime Minister, the Parliament or even of Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, the spiritual leader of the Maronites - have asked for fraternal Syrian assistance with a view to ridding the country of the rebellion in East Beirut, and that Syria's assistance has saved Lebanon from that most horrible cancerous growth that had ravaged the country, sapped its strength and nearly killed the hope of all the Lebanese people even after the signing of the Taif agreement, which was supported by every State in the world, with the exception of Israel.

Suffice it to quote what President Hrawi of Lebanon said in the course of a Syrian television interview on 3 October 1990:

"When signing the constitutional reforms I declared that the Second Republic had begun. When I assumed the presidency I took the oath to

(Mr. El-Fattal, Syrian Arab Republic)

unite Lebanon, to extend the power of the whole State to all Lebanese territory and to ensure that no one would dominate the Lebanese people - that no militia or any one else would determine the future of that people. I had to make the decision, and I therefore had to resort to sisterly Syria and its President, Hafiz Assad, who has always indicated that he wishes for Lebanon to be unified, not divided and that he wants an independent Lebanon in every sense of that word. Here I declare: we are one people and two independent States: Syria on the one hand and Lebanon on the other.

President Hrawi went on to say:

"Lebanon needed help to rid itself of the rebellion so that the authority of the State may be extended to the whole territory of the country. President Assad's answer to the request for assistance was 'Yes, we will help you'."

In answer to another question, President Hrawi said:

"There is room for all forces in Lebanon to crystallize politically. But with the government of national reconciliation in power, the next step is to have the cabinet represent the whole of Lebanon, in every aspect within the initiative of the Government on 11 July 1990."

I do not want at this late hour to go into great detail. However, I should like to make it very clear that the Israeli representative who spoke this morning tried to divert attention from the efforts of the international community to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and to focus attention on extraneous issues.